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ABSTRACT

Social theorists arguing that economic development is a process of modernization claim that traditional societies will follow the patterns of transformation already followed by modern societies, and that literacy can help instill the necessary values. An alternative theory, developed primarily in Latin America, argues that the relationships of economic dependency existing between developed and underdeveloped segments of society have created an international situation entirely different from that faced by the first developing nations. Writers like Freire, Gramsci, Sunkel, Fuenzalida, and Habermas have provided the theoretical basis for empirical study of the role of literacy from this alternative viewpoint. In differing ways, all these writers argue that the dominated segments of society, whether within a state or within the transnational economic complex, are controlled through the permeation of civil society by a system of values, beliefs, knowledge, and morality that in one way or another supports the established order. In this view educational programs are political strategies allowing the dominant to impose their conceptions of the world on the dominated. The author suggests using content analysis to study the impact of literacy in light of dependency theory, and provides models and guidelines to help determine the direction of research. (PGD)

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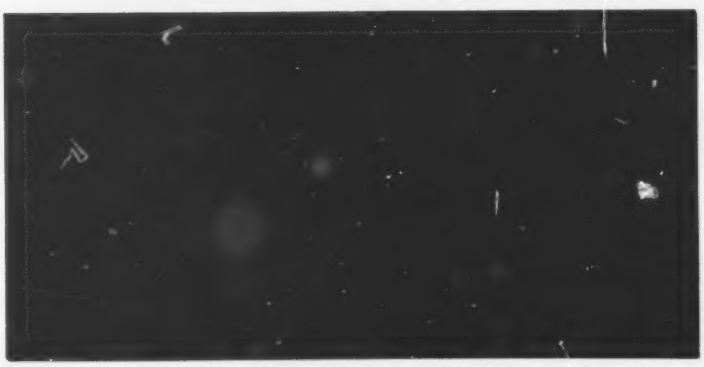

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AN ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL APPROACH FOR THE STUDY OF LITERACY AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Inasmuch as education is considered to be a factor in development, the concern over the prevalence of high illiteracy rates in some regions of the world has received a great deal of attention especially after the Second World War. This paper analyzes the role of literacy in development and discusses the controversies arising when different stands are taken in defining the concept of development: the Modernization versus the Dependency approach. The notorious prevalence of the Modernization approach in the literature on the subject and the lack of studies from a different standpoint constitutes the intellectual challenge this paper is addressing. Thus, its main purpose is to present a theoretical framework for the analysis of literacy and its role in development from within the perspective of the Dependency approach. Moreover, it provides a set of propositions that might be helpful guidelines for research in the field.

Introduction

The central issue in this paper is the problem of literacy and its role in development. As education is considered to be an important factor in development, the opposite — lack of education — is thought to be a factor in underdevelopment; concern with illiteracy thus goes hand in hand with concern with development itself.

Although education is viewed as an important factor in development, the role that education plays in the process is a matter of great controversy. This controversy arises with the notion of development itself, since each conception of development contains a diagnosis of the origin of the problem as well as a strategy to overcome it. However, a review of the literature on literacy reveals a notorius prevalence of the view that development is a process which transforms traditional societies into modern ones. In order for this process of modernization to take place, literacy is thought to be a fundamental necessity. In my view, this notion of development as modernization as well as the role of literacy in it, has to be revised and examined from a different standpoint.

In the 1960's, scholars in Latin America working along the lines of the Marxist theory of imperialism adopted another strategy for explaining the origins of underdevelopment: the dependency perspective. This perspective challenges the conventional approach to development by suggesting that underdevelopment in all its economic and social dimensions is a product and consequence of the development process itself. The cultural dimension has been somewhat neglected in this approach (e.g., when compared with the economic dimension), and I know of no empirical research on literacy

conducted from within this theoretical perspective. Moreover, studies of cultural dependency tend to be mechanical in their analysis and to exaggerate the role of external factors over internal ones.

One of the few scholars analyzing literacy within the framework of dependency is Paulo Freire. Freire's contribution to the field has been his method of consciousness raising as a means of liberation (independence) as opposed to the banking approach to education, which leads to domination and dependence. Most of Freire's writings are centered on the explanation of this new pedagogy, the method of conscientization (conscientizacão), rather than on explaining how the educational system functions in society.

In the latter respect, Antonio Gramsci's analysis is of great relevance to our purposes. Gramsci, focusing on early 20th century European society, wrote extensively on the role of the State in society. He considered the State not only as a political-military instrument, but also emphasized its political-ideological function (hegemony). For him, the State was equivalent to political society plus civil society, in other words, hegemony protected by the armour of coercion. The concepts of civil society and hegemony are extremely helpful in understanding the role of the educational system in society in its dual strategic function of maintaining and at the same time changing capitalist structures. However, inasmuch as Gramsci died in 1937, his work does not consider two important departures which have taken place in the development of the capitalist system after the Second World War; the emergence of transnational corporations and the fact that science and technology has become a leading productive force. For that reason I will complement the theoretical framework with Sunkel and Fuenzalida's analysis of the effects of

transnational corporations on culture as well as Habermas views on the role of science and technology in advanced industrial societies.

In this paper I will show how these theoretical perspective can be related and I will provide a set of propositions for the analysis of literacy programs and its role in development from the perspective of the dependency approach .

Modernization and Literacy

The basic assumption of the modernization approach* is that traditional societies will follow patterns of transformation similar to those undergone by modern societies. This is a unidirectional assumption which does not take into consideration historical factors. Moreover, the process is held to be universal in impact and highly predictable with regard to the end product.

Inspired in Ferdinand Toennies' work on two ideal polar types of socieities and its later development in Talcott Parsons' schema of pattern variables, this view assumes that the values, institutions, and patterns of action of traditional societies are the opposites of those prevailing in modern societies and constitute the cause of underdevelopment. Transformation in traditional societies will take place by increasing contacts with modern societies bringing about heterogeneity, the disorganization of traditional culture, and the adoption of innovations.

According to Lerner (1958,64), "literacy is indeed the basic personal skill that underlies the whole modernization process." This emphatic asser-

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*For additional information on the modernization and dependency approach, see J. S. Valenzuela and A. Valenzuela's article "Modernization and Dependency" (1978, 535-557).

tion is more or less shared by social scientists working in different fields as we will attempt to show.

First of all, literacy is thought to be central to modern economies. As Bowman and Anderson point out (1963,255), "a complex industrial society depends upon many kinds of mass communication and without near universal literacy these channels can function only imperfectly, requirements for higher education aside." These authors, concerned with the problem of economic development, tried to find out if it pays to make people literate. They demonstrate that very rich countries (1955 per capita incomes of over $500) have literacy rates of 90 percent or better, while poor countries (1955 per capita incomes of under $200) have literacy rates of 30 percent or below. However, in the range of 30-70 literacy they found virtually no correlation between literacy and per capita incomes. In fact, only five of the twenty-three countries with literacy rates between 40-70 percent had incomes over $300. Of course, the authors are aware that literacy as such does not produce a high income per capita but they say that "it is tempting to conclude that a literacy rate of 30 to 40 percent is a prerequisite to incomes exceeding $200 in most cases and $300 in all." (1963,252).

Mark Blaug (1966,393-94) also asserts that literacy contributes to economic development in different ways: 1) raising the productivity of new literates; 2) raising the productivity of individuals working in association with literates — the so-called spillover benefits of literacy; 3) expediting the flow of general knowledge of individuals (e.g., instructions about health and nutrition) and thus reducing the cost of transmitting useful information; 4) stimulating the demand for vocational training and

technical education; 5) acting as a device for selecting the more able and enhancing their occupational mobility; and finally, 6) strengthening economic incentives, meaning the tendency for people to respond positively to a rise in the rate of reward for their efforts.

In his article on literacy and economic development, Blaug argues that a convenient starting point for inquiry into the economic benefits of literacy is to look at simple correlations between literacy rates and incomes per head between countries over the same period of time and within countries between different time periods. He found that the world map of illiteracy corresponds rather closely with the world map of poverty. Although he acknowledges that correlation is not the same thing as causation, he concludes that, taking the history of newly developed countries as evidence, one might conclude that a 40 percent literacy rate is a necessary but not sufficient condition for rapid economic advance. If less that 40 percent literacy rate is a barrier to self-sustained economic growth, the question remains; exactly how does illiteracy impede the rise in incomes? According to the author, it is simply not true that illiteracy is an absolute barrier to economic progress. What is true is that there are definite limits to what can be accomplished with an illiterate population.

This idea of education as a factor in economic development was not a new idea in economics but it acquired fresh impetus in the mid 1950's when education was regarded as investment in manpower, as a way to increase the productivity of the labor force and several studies in human capital theory supplied evidence that investment in literacy and education in general is directly related to economic growth (Harbison and Myers 1964, among others).

Human capital theory interprets the correlation between education and individual earnings by inferring causal links between education and productivity and earnings. This theory also assumes that relevant differences in productivity between individuals can be explained by the amount of human capital possessed by each individual (human capital is acquired through investment in education and on the job training), and that earnings correspond to the increase in marginal productivity added by individual workers. (Thurow, 1972; Shultz, 1959).

Criticism of the causal relations postulated by this theory between education and productivity and earnings as well as of the possibilities for measuring the variables implied in the relationship and the methodologies used, have been formulated by many scholars. For instance, some authors (Bowles, 1975; Carnoy, 1975; Gintis, 1971; Levin, 1975) argue that the existence of social classes better explain both differences in schooling and differences in earnings. They suggest that people are allocated to different occupations and earnings to a great extent on the basis of their parents social class and that the principal function of schooling is to legitimize this class structure through a pretense of merit.

At the socio-psycological level, modernization involves a fundamental shift in values, attitudes, and expectations from traditional to modern ones. What is the role of literacy in this process of shifting to a modern outlook on life? According to Lerner, joint and interacting growth in urbanization, literacy, mass media participation and political participation accompanies the change. Urbanization moves people to the cities where literacy becomes more essential. Literacy then stimulates growth of the mass media, and as the media develop, there is more incentive for people to become liter-

ate. Literacy and the mass media also provide the channels through which political knowledge passes, facilitating broad-based political participation. Thus, Lerner reached two conclusions with regard to literacy after analyzing this sequence: 1) literacy is the basic personal skill that underlies the whole process of modernization, and 2) with literacy there comes more than the simple skill of reading. (Lerner 1958, 63-64).

At the political level, literacy is considered to be essential for social mobilization.* Huntington (1971) for instance, acknowledges the fact that modernization is a multifaceted process involving changes in all areas of human thought and activity, but he argues that in order for one of the aspects of modernization most relevant to politics to take place -- social mobilization -- a change in the attitudes, values and expectations of people must take place. This change, according to Huntington (1971),33) is a "consequence of literacy, education, increased communications, mass media exposures, and urbanization."

Research in the field of literacy, taking into consideration variables both of socio-psychological and a political nature, reflects the theoretical perspective described above. A case in point is Rogers and Herzog's study of Colombian peasants. The objectives of their study were: 1) to examine the conceptual nature of literacy; 2) to report on the use of a measure of functional literacy; and 3) to determine the correlates of functional literacy among Colombian peasants. Five villages were studied, and about 250 interviews were conducted.

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*"...is the process by which" major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior. (Deutsch 1961,494).

As a measure of "functional literacy" a brief sentence made up of words of varying difficulty was chosen. The resulting literacy scores were compared with the respondents' self-defined ability to read a newspaper and to write a letter. High positive correlations were obtained between the functional literacy scores, self-defined abilities, and years of formal education received. The authors conclude the study saying that the consequences of literacy found in the study generally emphasize the importance of this variable in individual modernization in developing societies. Functional literacy was found to be related to mass media exposure, to be more characteristic of children than adults, to be associated with empathy, agricultural and home innovativeness, achievement motivation, farm size, trips to urban centers, political knowledge, and sociometric opinion leadership" (Rogers and Herzog 1966, 203). These authors suggest that future research should be conducted on newly literate adults to see how their attitudes and behavior are changed by gaining the ability to read and write.

This is also the central concern in the Schuman-Inkeles-Smith study of the effects and noneffects of literacy. Schuman, Inkless and Smith (1967) were interested in searching for the ways in which teaching men to read and write influences their performance of such crucial social roles as those of citizen, worker, and consumer. The authors studied samples of factory workers and farmers in East Pakistan in the hope that the characteristics of the sample would help to disentangle literacy effects from the effects of urbanization and occupation. The central concerns of this study were two-fold: first to see the extent to which literacy was associated with level of education and verbal aptitude, and second, the

ways in which literacy was related — or not related — to the development of new identities, perceptions, and attitudes.

The results of this research show that self-reported levels of literacy were highly accurate, that the degree of self-reported literacy was almost identical with the amount of primary education, and in addition is substantially related to verbal ability. Literacy was also highly correlated to identification with the nation rather than with the local community. However, the authors conclude that "rather than finding literacy to be a factor which completely pervades and shapes a man's entire view of the world, we find it limited to those spheres where vicarious and abstract experience is especially meaningful. The more practical part of man's outlook, however, is determined by his actual daily experience in significant roles" (Shuman, Inkeles, Smith 1967,7).

In my opinion, the examples of research presented here are representative of the extensive literature in the field. In general, the studies are centered on two issues. On the one hand some are interested in discovering the existence of a supposedly worldwide pattern of modernization that will help to predict the pattern that traditional societies will follow; thus their preoccupation with the minimum literacy rate needed for sustained economic growth implies a belief that the requirements faced by underdeveloped societies today are the same requirements faced in the past by presently developed societies. On the other hand, various studies are interested in the issue of how literacy can help instill modern values in individuals, and how literacy can help in changing personality traits that are considered to be detrimental to the whole process of modernization.

The relevance of two issues mentioned above is questioned in the dependency perspective. This perspective claims that it is not clear at present that underdeveloped socieites will ever follow the patterns of today's modern societies. This perspective also questions the assumption that what is needed in underdeveloped societies is to instill modern values in individuals, to change personality traits; the problem, rather than being a problem of individuals, is a structural one. This structural problem, according to the dependency perspective, is generated by the expansion of the capitalist system of production, as I will explain in the next section.

Dependency and Literacy

The dependency approach conceives underdevelopment as a structurally different kind of situation generated and conditioned by the very existence and evolution of the capitalist system. Sunkel (1973) finds that the main difference between the developed and underdeveloped structures is that the developed, due basically to their endogenous capacity, are the dominant structures, while the underdeveloped structures, due largely to the induced character of their dynamism, are dependent. According to Sunkel this applies to whole countries and to regions, social groups and activities within a single country.

Reformulations of the development problem along the lines of dependency, suggest that the capitalist countries of Latin America are bound to a type of international structure which yields perpetual underdevelopment in the region. In the terminology of dependency writers, domination and power relationships sustain backwardness in the more "peripheral" areas, whose economic surplus is appropriated by the dominant and developed "center".

The dependency approach postulates a harmony of economic and social interests shared by the dominant countries and the dominant sectors within developing countries, and a disharmony of interests between the nationally dominant center and the national periphery. There exists a relationship of exploitation in which the privileged position of certain nations, sectors and classes are systematically integrated with different national sectors and committed to a specific form of socio-economic organization which does not function in the interest of the majority of the population. The relationship is seen as one of dependency because it is characterized by dependence on forms that arise economically and intellectually in the centers of power.

I want to call attention to the fact that dependence relationships are internal as well as international. In both cases a propertied minority exploit the labor of the majority and systematically benefits from those relationships. In this regard Cardoso and Faletto are quite explicit:

> "These relationships are the result of the actions of social groups whose behavior connects the economic and political spheres. It is important to note that this action takes place within the context of the nation and its multiple ties to the broader world economic and political system. Thus dependency is not just an internal manifestation; its genuine character is determined by structural relations: a specific type of class and group relationship that implies a situation of domination structurally tied to the metropole. In this respect, dependency should not be considered merely an "external variable", but rather within the configuration of social class relationships in dependent nations." (1970,29).

Here I would like to emphasize two aspects of the completeness of this relationship:

a. dependent relationships are complete in that they are political, social and institutional as well as more narrowly economic,

b. on the other hand, those "complete dependent relationships" of the economic and political system refer as much to the situation within countries as to their relation with the center countries.

In spite of these general orientations, dependency authors have mainly focused their studies on the economic linkages between the center and the periphery. These linkages, which are internally stamped on the economic structure, constitute the main characteristic of the dependent capitalist social formations. However, a theory of the relationships between the center and the peripheral states has not been fully elaborated.*

In this study I will not explore the economic aspects of dependence relations, which have already been extensively treated in the writings of Enzo Faletto Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Osvaldo Sunkel, Theotonio dos Santos, and others. Rather I will explore some of the aspects of the relationship which are expressly cultural. The cultural dimension, although of concern to some authors, has been less fully explored than the economic dimension. Those authors deal with the function of the cultural and ideological systems in a dependent society by studying the effects of the diffusion of ideas, values, norms, and knowledge from the center to the periphery.

Examples of work on cultural dependency include the works of Ludovico Silva on the practical effects of capitalist ideology on Latin American development (L. Silva 1971), Armand Mattelart on the structure and content

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*Here I am using the word "theory" loosely to refer to this particular "way of framing the question of underdevelopment" (Fagen, 1976).

of Chilean ruling class ideology as manifested in its resistance to agrarian reform (A. Mattelart 1970), Juan Corradi on the culture and ideology of local elites and their relations to development (J. Corradi 1971), Tomás Vasconi on superstructure and dependence (T. Vasconi 1969), and Martin Carnoy on the role played by the educational system in dependent (colonial) societies (M. Carnoy 1974).

Most of the work in this field consists of studies of the structure of communications and mass-media. Some examples are Mattelart's studies of the structure of power in the mass media, the ideology of the Chilean press, and its relations with foreign communication networks, (A. Mattelart et al., 1970), Pasquali's studies of the mass media in Venezuela and their relation to foreign values (A. Pasquali 1963) and Luis Ramiro Beltrán's study of the content of Latin American television (L. R. Beltrán 1978).

There are also several studies of university education and dependency like those of Edmundo Fuenzalida, who attempts to measure cultural dependency in higher education (E. Fuenzalida 1970), Osvaldo Sunkel on dependency and university reforms (O. Sunkel 1970), Hector Silva-Michelena on the role of the university in dependent societies, and Patricia Weiss-Fagen on the problems of Autonomy and dependence in Chilean universities (P. Weiss-Fagen 1973).

In some of the earlier studies in the field, there was a tendency to treat the cultural aspects of dependency solely as "an external variable", or to treat culture as a "manufactured good" received from the center, without taking into consideration that the cultural content of much social communication has bases which are institutional, political and national. There was also a tendency to fall back on the simple fact that American

T.V. serials (e.g., "Sesame Street", "Kung Fu", or "Mission Impossible") are the most popular shows on television in Latin American countries.

Research on literacy done from the dependency approach is extremely scarce. Except for Paulo Freire's theoretical work on literacy and dependency, as well as some descriptions of literacy programs using Freire's method and the work of INDICEP (Instituto de Investigacion Cultural para Educación Popular 1971) in Bolivia, I do not know any empirical studies in the field.

Paulo Freire sees Latin America's cultural stituation as one where the "culture of silence" predominates. He argues that this mode of culture is "a superstructural expression which conditions a special form of consciousness which corresponds to the concrete reality of such dependent societies" (Freire 1970, 34-36). This culture of silence that predominates in Latin America is not an entity created by the metropolis in specialized laboratories and transported to the Third World. Neither, in his view, is it a culture that emerges by spontaneous generation. Rather, the culture of silence is born in the relationship between the Third World and the metropolis. "It is not the dominator who constructs a culture and imposes it on the dominated. This culture is the result of the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators. Thus, understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon which gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression, those of the culture of silence and those of the culture which has a voice" (Freire 1970,32).

Moreover, Freire asserts that understanding the culture of silence is possible only if it is taken as a totality which is itself part of a

greater whole because, in his words, "both the metropolitan society and the dependent society, totalities in themselves, are part of a greater whole, the historical cultural and political context in which their mutual relationships evolve." (Freire 1970, 33). He is aware that in spite of being part of the same whole, so that the context in which these societies exist is also the same, the quality of the relation is different in each case, being determined by the role played by each in the context of their interrelation.

The action of the metropolitan society upon the dependent society has a directive character, whereas the object society's action whether it be response or initiative, has a dependent character.

Paulo Freire calls "semi-intransitive" the mode of consciousness that corresponds to the concrete reality of dependent societies and, he characterizes this form of consciousness as one that

> "fails to perceive many reality's challenges, or perceives them in a distorted way. This mode of consciousness cannot objectify the facts and problematical situations of daily life. Men whose consciousness exists at this level of quasi-immersion lack what we call 'structural perception', which shapes and reshapes itself from concrete reality in the aprehension of facts and problematic situations. Lacking structural perception, men attribute the sources of such facts and situations in their lives, in either case to something outside objective reality. It is not hard to trace here the origins of fatalistic positions men assume in certain situations. If the explanations for those situation lies in a superior power, or in men's own 'natual' incapacity, it is obvious that their action will not be oriented towards transforming reality, but towards those superior beings responsible for the problematic situations, or towards that presumed incapacity. Their action, therefore, has the character of defensive magic or therapeutic magic". (Freire 1970,36).

However, the impact of infrastructural change, he explains, produced the first "cracks" in Latin American societies, whereupon they entered into a stage of historical and cultural transition. This historical transition, lived by all Latin America to a greater or lesser degree, corresponds in Freire's view to a new phase of popular consciousness, that of

"naive transitivity". He states:

> "Formerly the popular consciousness was a semi-transitive, limited to meeting the challenges relative to biological needs. In the process of emerging from silence, the capacity of the popular consciousness expands so that men begin to be able to visualize and distinguish what before was not clearly outlined.
>
> Although the qualitative difference between the semi-transitive consciousness and the naive transitive consciousness can be explained by the phenomenon of emergence due to structural transformation in society, there are no rigidly defined frontiers between the historical moments which produce qualitative changes in men's awareness. In many respects, the semi-transitive consciousness remains present in the naive-transitive consciousness. In Latin America, for example, almost the entire peasant population is still in the stage of quasi-immersion". (Freire 170,38).

The two modes of consciousness explained above are instruments for maintaining cultural dependence; thus Freire states that in order to overcome cultural dependence (cultural domination or the culture of silence) a conscientization process must take place in society. According to him, conscientization is more than a simple 'prise de conscience'. More than overcoming a semi-intransitive or naive state of consciousness, it implies the critical insertion of the conscientized person into a demythologized reality. Freire argues that it is only through a conscientization process that the maximum of potential consciousness can be attained; that is "critical consciousness" characterized by

> "depth in the interpretation of problems; by the substitution of magical explanations; causal principles for the testing of one's 'findings' and by openness to revision; by the attempts to avoid distortion when perceiving problems, and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions;..." (Freire 1973,18).

According to Freire the response in Latin America to this emergence of popular consciousness is the military coup. This response varies with the relative influence of the military in different countries. According to the degree of its violence and that of subsequent repression of the

people, the military coup reactivates old patterns of behavior in the people, patterns which belong to their former state of quasi-immersion. This is the only explanation, Freire thinks, for the passivity of the people when faced with the violence and arbitrary rule of the Latin American military regimes.

Most of Freire's writings are devoted to the analysis and explanation of a method of consciousness raising in literacy training, rather than to analyzing the process of cultural dependency itself. Here we think Gramsci's ideas can be helpful in better understanding the process, as will be explored in the next section.

The concept of cultural dependency expresses the particular way in which the production and diffusion of knowledge in the center nation is related to the production and diffusion of knowledge in the peripheral nations. This concept then belongs to the realm of "civil society" as it is understood by Gramsci. In dependent countries, the permeation of the society by the entire system of values, beliefs, attitudes and morality that supports the established order stems, not only from the national society itself, but also from the center nation. Susanne Bodenheimer's notion of clientele social classes, "those which have a vested interest in the existing international system, characterizes those groups inside dependent countries which exercise control over the entire society on behalf of foreign interests. These classes in return enjoy a dominant and hegemonic position within their own societies based largely on economic, political, cultural or military support from abroad." (Bodenheimer 1971,163). Therefore in dependent capitalist societies, the function of hegemony is exercised by classes which are structurally linked

with foreign interests; the phenomenon of dependency is not a situation external to those socieities, but rather is expressed internally in their class and power structures.

Unequal relationships become benign and "natural" when they become legitimate, i.e., when they are supported by shared attitudes, values and beliefs which mystify the true nature of the relationship. The dependency relationship can then be seen in its other dimension, i.e., related to the superstructure rather than to the economic base. It is important to spell out this point in order to understand how Gramsci's reinterpretation of the notion of the State and the role of the superstructure can enrich the dependency approach.

Structure and Superstructure in Gramsci's Thought

Antonio Gramsci, who directed the Italian Communist Party during the 1920's and died in 1937 after ten years in prison, was one of the most insightful Marxists after Lenin. Gramsci fought against the mechanistic interpretation of Marxism. In the struggle to overcome capitalist society, he emphasized the importance of the intervention of human will against the vulgar mechanicism of those Marxists who thought that the mere development of the economic structure would lead to socialist transformation. For him, objective conditions become historically operative only when they are "subjectively" realized, when they are taken into the minds of man, given shape, and applied to specific contexts. He does not deny the determinant conditions of the structure, but stresses the importance of consciousness and human will in transforming society. He rejects the traditional dichotomy between materialism and idealism, or subject and object, because "an approach that divides the world into two components — mind and matter — can only lead

to the separation of philosophy and science, fact and value, thought and action characteristic of the bourgeois ideology". (Gramsci, quoted in Boggs 1972,91).

Studying Gramsci's work, Norberto Bobbio (1972) points out that Gramsci differs from Marx in considering 'civil society' as a part of the superstructure. While for Marx 'civil society' is considered as a system of needs, or economic relations, for Gramsci it is considered to be the institutions that regulate those economic relations. This change led Gramsci to consider the relationship between the structure and the superstructure in a manner slightly different from Marx:

> "the relationship between the premise (economic structure) and the result (political organization) is far from simple and direct. The history of a people cannot be documented with economic facts alone. The threads of causation are complex and tangled and the only way to unravel them and arrive to a deeper understanding of a nation's history is through extensive and in-depth study of all intellectual and practical activities that have gone on and go on in its midst. Thus the economic structure does not directly determine political action but is mediated by human interpretation of both the economic structure and the so-called laws that govern the development of the economic structures". (Gramsci as quoted in Bobbio 1972,81).

> He uses the term "catharsis"...to indicate the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political moment, that is the superior elaboration of the structure into superstructure in the minds of men. This also means the passage from 'objective to subjective' and from 'necessity to freedom'. Structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives. To establish the 'cathartic moment' becomes therefore, it seems to me, the starting point for all the philosophy of praxis and the cathartic process coincides with the chain of synthesis which has resulted from the evolution of the dialectic". (Gramsci, 1971,366-67).

The passage from the structure to the superstructure through the recognition of necessity by the subject is a precondition for the transformation of reality. The ethico-political moment (the moment of freedom, i.e., the consciousness of necessity, of material conditions) dominates over the

economic moment insofar as it is only through this recognition of 'objectivity' that the subject can transform the material conditions into instruments of action to accomplish his ends. (Bobbio 1972,82).

Structure and superstructure form an 'historical bloc', i.e., a global historical situation. The 'historical bloc' depends on the social structure (social classes) which in turn depends on the relationship of the productive forces, and furthermore, on the political and ideological superstructure. The organic ties between these two elements of the 'historical bloc' are formed by certain social groups which operate at the superstructural level: the intellectuals. It is at this level where Gramsci develops Marxist theory by introducing the concept of 'hegemony'. Marxist-Leninist theory of the State had paid more attention to the role of force as the basis of the State than to the role of ideological control, manipulation and domination.

It is clear that no regime, regardless of how coercive or authoritarian it might be, could sustain itself through force alone. In the long run, the scope of popular support of 'legitimacy' is bound to be crucial, particularly in moments of crisis. Gramsci distinguishes the function of domination from that of hegemony or direction. By domination he means direct political coercion, and by hegemony or direction, consent and ideological control. Both functions correspond to the State. Thus, he enlarged the notion of State itself:

> "The general notion of the State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that State = political society + civil society), in other words hegemony protected by the armour coercion (Gramsci 1971,262).

Hegemony* consists of the permeation throughout civil society of an entire system of values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, morality (ideology) that in one way or another supports the established order. This worldview (or combinations of worldviews) permeates art, law, economic activity and all the manifestations of intellectual and collective life. It is diffused throughout all social groups under different forms of philosophy, religion, common sense and folklore in accordance with the level of intellectual sophistication of each social group. A whole range of institutions and activities such as schools, the church, the family and the trade unions accomplish this task. In this way society is directed and the ideology of the ruling class becomes internalized by the general population, including the oppressed. Insofar as all ruling classes seek to perpetuate their power, wealth and status, they strive to universalize their own belief systems as part of the 'natural' order of things. If they are successful, people will consent to their own exploitation and misery. Thus, hegemony seeks to create consensus through mystification.

The role of political society is the direct domination or command of the State. Gramsci defines it as "a dictatorship or some other coercive apparatus used to control the masses in conformity with a given type of production and economy" (Gramsci 1973,204). The State coercive apparatus assures the disciplin of those groups which do not consent, and is available to be used against any group in case of a crisis in command and

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*One hesitates to use the term "hegemony" without further discussion for there are several definitions even in Gramsci's work. For a detailed review of the concept see the excellent work of Perry Andersen, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci" (1976-77,5-80).

direction, and the failure of spontaneous consensus. The function of political society is therefore the maintenance of the established order through coercive means. Political society is not restricted to the military use of force, but it also includes legal coercion: "The law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilizing activity undertaken by the State" (Gramsci 1973, 247). By enlarging the notion of coercion, Gramsci distinguishes different aspects of political society according to their links with civil society: dictatorship, when political society is autonomous vis-a-vis civil society, and political hegemony, when political society depends on civil society. He also distinguishes the technical-military aspect, the mere use of force, from the political-military aspect, the political direction of coercion.

The use of political society against those groups (the subordinate classes) that do not 'consent' to the direction of the ruling class as well as its use in case of organic crisis (when the ruling class has lost control over civil society) is made through the State apparatus. But the concepts of political society and the State are not equivalent. Political society, as well as civil society, is a functional concept. When the State apparatus cannot control the subordinate classes in a situation of orgnic crisis, the ruling class may develop paramilitary organizations to maintain domination. When these organizations accomplish their mission, they are incorporated into the State apparatus.

Gramsci further interrelates the two moments of the superstructure: civil society, the moment of consensus, and political society, the moment or coercion. Domination cannot be founded only on consensus (this would be utopian). On the other hand, domination based exclusively on force is

always temporary, occurring only when there is a crisis of the historical bloc in which the ruling class loses its ideological hegemony over the entire society and needs to employ force to maintain its domination. There is thus a constant relationship between civil and political society. For instance, when the State wants to implement an unpopular policy it seeks to create in advance a favorable public opinion, organizing and centralizing certain elements of civil society. Parliment is the organ of political society which creates law, but it is also the official expression of public opinion and therefore an organ of civil society. According to Gramsci,

> "The normal exercise of hegemony in what have classically been parliamentary systems is characterized by a combination of force and consensus which are balanced in various ways, without force going beyond the bounds of consensus. When force is used it should appear to emanate from majority consensus which is manifested through public opinion forums: newspapers, and associations. As a result a multiplicity of these forums are artificially created" (Gramsci 1973,80).

These examples show that there is not a complete and organic distinction between civil and political society. In order to exercise hegemony, the ruling class uses and combines both. The sharp distinction between 'private' organizations in charge of civil society (ideology and culture) and the State managing political society is characteristic of the liberal State. But Gramsci already pointed out that civil society had become managed directly by the State. He gives the examples of the decay of the traditional parliamentary political parties, the State monopoly over the new organs of public opinion and attempts to control the older ones (i.e., trade unions). He also includes the increasing State control over culture and education, formerly in the hands of 'private' organizations such as the Church.

Although the examples presented refer to the Italian fascist State, the trend to which Gramsci pointed has continued after the Second World War. The importance of the State in education and the management of public opinion is greater now than it was in Gramsci's times. This transformation as well as other important transformations which have occurred in the capitalist system in the recent decades are the subject matter of the next section.

Major Transformations of the Capitalist System After the Second World War

The phenomenon of increasing State control over culture and education is a fundamental trend in post-war capitalist societies. Another observed trend is the growing proportion of the population having access to education; therefore we observe a great expansion of the educational systems both in developed and underdeveloped societies. These transformations are related to two other transformations occurring in the capitalist system after the Second World War: the emergence of the multinational corporations and the fact that science and technology have become a leading productive force.

A recent trend among scholars working from the dependency approach is represented by the joint studies of Osvaldo Sunkel and Edmundo Fuenzalida. These authors are interested in characterizing the most recent changes of the capitalist system in its passage from an international phase to a transnational one. They argue that the emergence and worldwide diffusion of the multinational corporate phenomenon has important effects on the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of the capitalist system itself, both at the world level and also at the level of developed and underdeveloped societies. Thus, the formal distinction of center and periphery presented in early works within the framework of dependency is

becoming more complex.

Due to the emergence of multinational corporations, the transformation of capitalism from an international to a transnational system brought a double process of disintegration of the previous social structure and its integration at a transnational level. At the same time, the authors suggest that counterprocesses of reintegration might be generated in national societies with the aim at reasserting national identity and values. They explain the process as follows:

> "According to our general theses, the process of transnationalization has disintegrative effects, followed by attempts at reintegration on the part of those affected; we also suggest that these interconnected processes occur simultaneously at the economic, social, cultural and political levels. From the point of view of the unfolding of the historical process, we assume initially that these processes occur in the following sequence: transnational integration, national disintegration and reintegrative responses, although we recognize of course that they coexist to some degree" (1977,15).

What is interesting for me in their work is that they devote special attention to the cultural level (Sunkel-Fuenzalida 1975) in describing the mechanisms of incorporation of countries into the capitalist system in its transnational phase as well as in referring to the effects this process of transformation has. Moreover, they advance the hypothesis that the main cultural effects of the transnational corporations at the level of common culture can be stated as follows:

1. disintegration of previous culture, national or local,
2. emergence of a set of norms, values, ideas, and beliefs, etc. that may be labelled transnational culture,
3. emergence of several different counter-transnational cultures, according to the type of cultural situation (1975,21).

One of the main characteristics of this transnational culture, according to Fuenzalida, is that "it is permeated by specialized knowledge possessed by its carriers, which has allowed them to become members of the transnational community. Since this knowledge is based on the progress attained by the systematic use of the so-called 'scientific method' to every aspect of reality, the transnationals' approach to the world and to themselves is heavily influenced by the 'ways' of science and technology" (1977,5). This is precisely what we would like to elaborate as another major transformation occurring in the capitalist system since the Second World War.

Jürgen Habermas, currently one of the most important German sociologists working in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, has been concerned with the way in which the major transformations taking place in the capitalist system of production affect contemporary Western society. In particular he addresses himself to the analysis of the role of science and technology in advanced industrial societies and observes that, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there has been an increase in State intervention in order to assure the system's stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology which has turned science into a leading productive force. Habermas also states that he agrees with Marcuse's basic thesis according to which technology and science today have also taken on the function of legitimizing political power. (Habermas 1970, 100-105).

On the other hand, Habermas argues that since the end of the nineteenth century one developmental characteristic of advanced capitalism has become increasingly momentous: the scientization of technology.

Institutional pressure to augment the productivity of labor through the introduction of new technology has always existed under capitalism, but in the past innovations depended on sporadic inventions which, while economically motivated, were still fortuitous in character. "This changed as technical development entered into a feedback relation with the progress of modern sciences. With the advent of large scale industrial research, science, technology and industrial utilization were fused into a system". (Habermas 1970,104).

Habermas begins his essay "Technology and Science as Ideology" analyzing Marcuse's claim that "what Weber called 'rationalization' realizes not rationality as such but rather, in the name of rationality, a specific form of unacknowledged political domination" (1970,72). Whereas 'rationalization' refers to purposive rational action to organize efficiently the means to achieve certain ends or to develop procedures for the correct choice among alternative strategies, Habermas thinks that if we identify rationality with 'rationalization', rationality is then conceived as the equivalent of making efficient choices, choices removed from the social framework of interests whose aims are not subject to critical examination.

In this context, being rational becomes a matter of achieving a certain scientific expertise, a matter of choosing the appropriate means, the correct technology. In this line of reasoning, rational choice comes to mean making decisions in accordance with the discoveries and rationale of scientific experts. In this way, Habermas asserts; "rationalization of the conditions of life is synonymous with the institutionalization of a form of domination whose political character becomes unrecognizable" (1970,82). Moreover, rationality conceived this way cannot "function as

the basis of a critique of the prevailing legitimations in the interests of political enlightenment". (1970,84). This fetishizing of science, Habermas believes, is a key feature of our culture which distorts our understanding; in this way a technocratic consciousness comes to dominate our lives and also depoliticize the population.

Further, Habermas argue that this scientistic ideology has become politically more important in advanced capitalist societies because the 'laizzes faire' ideology of liberal capitalism can no longer legitimize the system; therefore the capitalist system must find a new ideological legitimation. Scientism, thus becomes the central element in the ideology of advanced capitalism together with an ideology of achievement that, according to this author "in its more recent versions, occupational success mediated through formal schooling, takes the place of success in the market" (1973,81). What has remained constant, however, is the belief that rewards should be distributed on the basis of individual achievement.

The situation described above can only be altered, in Habermas, view, by:

> "a change in the state of consciousness itself, by the practical effect of a theory which does not improve the manipulation of things and of reifications, but which instead advances the interest of reason in human adulthood, in the autonomy of action and in the liberation from dogmatism" (1972,256).

This change of consciousness, which can only be attained through unrestricted communication (theory of communicative competence in Habermas) refers to some extent to the problem addressed by Freire in his work on levels of consciousness and his method of conscientization, to what Sunkel and Fuenzalida refer to as 'reintegrative processes', also to what Gramsci sees as the 'creation of counter-hegemony' that is, the awakening of class-

consciousness through a rejection of the hegemonic project that supports the established order. It is my belief that, although each author stresses particular aspects of the problem at different levels of abstraction, and that the different emphases relate to the particular processes these authors were dealing with together with the concrete historical situations they faced their theoretical developments can be related. In the next section I will try to demonstrate how these different theoretical developments can be related.

Guidelines for Conducting Research

Having stated an alternative theoretical framework for the study of literacy, what is needed now is to try to discover what are the main issues of concern in the field from this theoretical perspective. Certainly this approach is not interested in knowing the rates of return of literacy programs nor in studies such as those measuring how variable "x" (be it productivity, innovation, need for achievement, etc.) varies after learning how to read and write. Rather, it is my view that the issue of central concern in the field of literacy and education in general, for this theoretical approach is that of hegemony in society.

As it was said in previous sections of this paper, the concepts of civil society and hegemony are key concepts for the analysis of education in this framework. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is the permeation throughout civil society of an entire system of values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and morality that in one way or another supports*

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*Such a system seeks to create consensus, to obtain the consent of the governed through the diffusion of a unifying ideology that functions as the basis for the social formation. In Habermas' terms, it seeks to create legitimacy.

the established order. This entire system constitutes what Gramsci calls a worldview, the ideology of dominant sectors, or in Sunkel and Fuenzalida's terms, the culture. Thus for Gramsci every hegemonic relation is a pedagogical relation and every program of education is a political strategy of the dominant sectors for imposing their conception of the world.

Following this line of reasoning I was able to derive from the alternative theoretical framework for the study of literacy some general hypotheses that constitute broad guidelines for empirical research in the field:

1. The educational system, as an important part of civil society, reflects in the curriculum content of its programs the hegemonic projects (worldviews) of the class or class coalition controlling the State apparatus.
2. Literacy programs sponsored by the State, as a particular instance of the educational system, will reflect in their curriculum content the hegemonic projects of the class or class coalition controlling the State apparatus.
3. Changes in the composition of the class coalition controlling the State apparatus will bring about changes in curriculum content so as to better reflect the hegemonic views of the new groups in power.
4. The hegemonic projects of a transnationalized class coalition controlling the State apparatus will tend to enhance transnational culture.
5. Literacy programs sponsored by a State controlled by a transnationalized coalition will enhance transnational culture in their curriculum content.
6. Literacy programs that enhance transnational culture constitute a mechanism of incorporation to the transnational system with the predicted effects of disintegrating the national culture, depoliticization, and dependency.

7. The hegemonic projects of a disengaged class coalition controlling the State apparatus will tend to enhance critical consciousness.
8. Literacy programs sponsored by a State controlled by a disengaged coalition will enhance critical consciousness in their curriculum content.
9. Literacy programs that enhance critical consciousness constitute a mechanism of disengagement with the predicted effects of reintegration of national culture, politicization, and development.

The main tasks faced by any researcher seeking empirical means to test the above-stated hypotheses are, on the one hand, to find a suitable technique enabling the researcher to apprehend the main features of the worldview diffused by the State through adult literacy programs and on the other, the design of an analytical tool enabling the researcher to identify and differentiate a worldview that enhances transnational culture from one that enhances critical consciousness.

I believe that one of the best ways to apprehend the main features of the worldview diffused by the State through adult literacy programs is by using the technique of content analysis. Content analysis is "a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1969,25). What are the specified characteristics of the messages that we are interested in identifying? derived from the alternative theoretical framework presented, I will distinguish two polar situations:

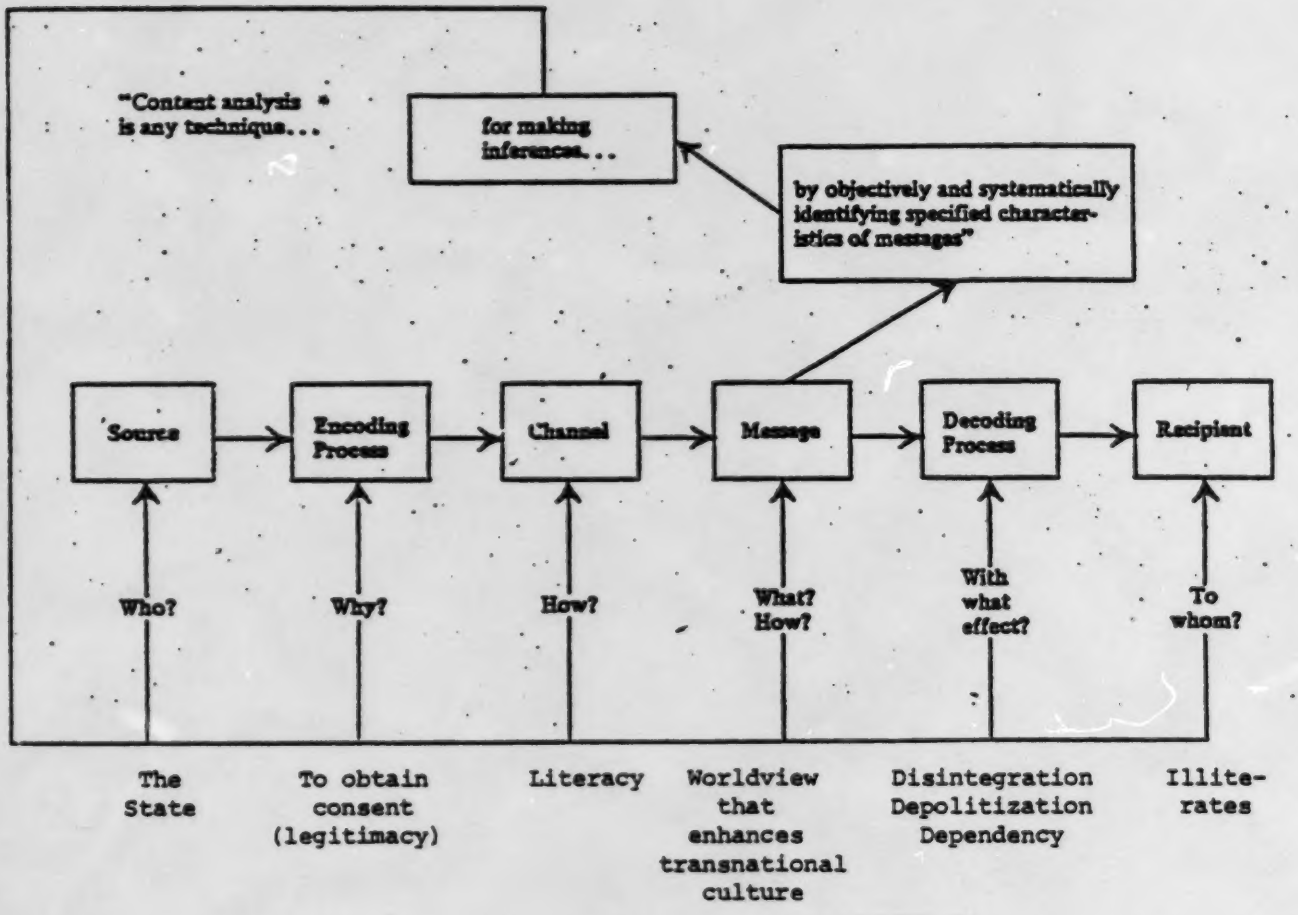
I. If the worldview diffused through literacy programs enhances transnational culture, following Sunkel and Fuenzalida one can consider literacy as a mechanism of incorporation into the transnational

system; (and) therefore predict that such programs have the effect of disintegrating national culture;

II. However, if the worldview diffused through literacy programs enhances critical consciousness, following Sunkel-Fuenzalida, and Freire one can consider literacy as a mechanism of disengagement and therefore predict that they will have a reintegrative effect.

Situation I.

Literacy as a mechanism of incorporation (dependency)



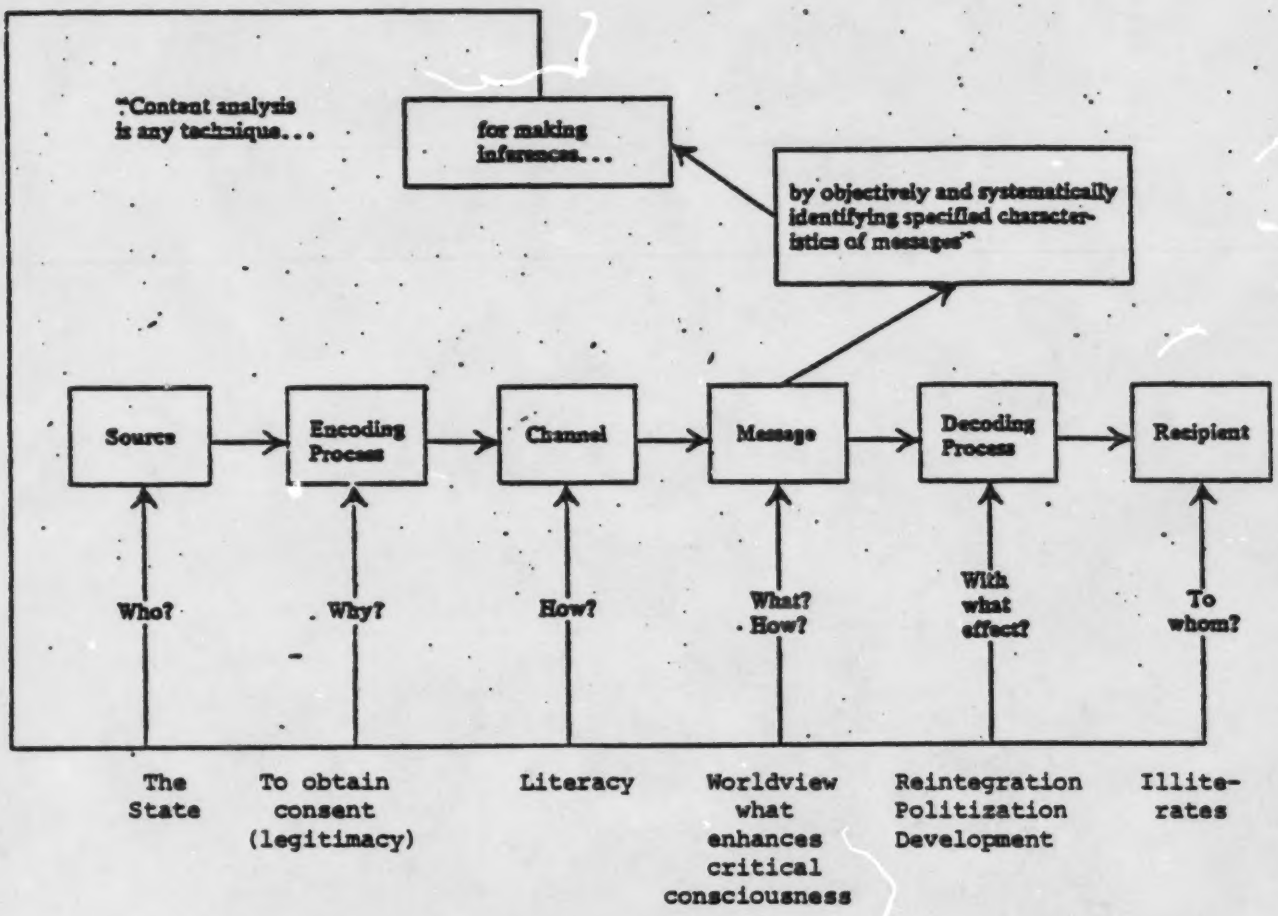
*This flow diagram was adapted from Ole R. Holsti (1969,25).

From the description of Situation I it becomes apparent that it is crucial for this framework to try to characterize what has been called "transnational culture." This characterization will enable the researcher to objectively and systematically identify, through content analysis, cultural elements which might be labelled transnational in the textbooks used in adult literacy programs. The following are the main characteristics of the transnational culture which I was able to derive from the theoretical framework:

1. Identification of underdevelopment as a problem requiring technical solutions devised by bureaucratic agencies.
2. Emphasis on science and technology as the basis for legitimacy.
3. Ideology of achievement, emphasis on formal schooling as the basis for the distribution of social rewards.
4. Emphasis on the harmony of interests among different groups in society ("we", "the people of our country").
5. Stress on free exchange and free competition with regard to access to the benefits of society.
6. Emphasis on high levels of consumption to satisfy "needs".
7. Emphasis on the importance of maintaining the system: power structure, laws, rules, etc.

Situation II.

Literacy as a mechanism of disengagement (development)



Similarly, from the description of situation II it becomes apparent that one needs to characterize what has been called a "worldview that enhances critical consciousness." This characterization will enable the researcher to objectively and systematically identify, through content analysis, those cultural elements which correspond to that worldview in the textbooks used in adult literacy programs. The following are the main characteristics which I was able to derive from the theoretical framework:

1. Identification of underdevelopment as a problem requiring political solutions, not only technical ones, where people are involved in the selection and implementation of solutions.
2. Emphasis on the rights of people to discuss and finally agree on what should be done.
3. Recognition of necessities and effort: not only schooling, as the basis for the distribution of social rewards.
4. Emphasis on the existence of disharmony of interests among different groups in society ("we are not equal," recognition of the existence of social classes).
5. Stress on the unequal distribution of limited goods and unequal competition over access to the benefits of society.
6. Emphasis on the satisfaction of basic needs.
7. Emphasis on the importance of transforming the system: power structure, laws, rules, etc.

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